Naam Simran Made Easy

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Simran in Sikhism signifies meditation. The prime purpose of meditation is to improve the quality of living. This is possible if we regularly become one with our inner spirit/self (Atma) which leads to union with the 'Creator', the 'Source of Being', the 'Source of Existence', more commonly known as Waheguru Parmatma (God). Our Atma (soul) is the seed of Parmatma. Our Atma is like the wave which originates from the ocean, our God. It is the flame which originates from creator, momentarily takes shape and then recedes back into its source.

To most of us quality of life is primarily what we desire most in this human form. Basically, these desires culminate into the following tangible/objective categories: health, wealth and success.

We collectively have one desire which is intangible and subjective...HAPPINESS!

The first three are the sum total of all our materialistic desires. Human life, the Sikh way, as a grahasti (householder/worldly person) requires such aspirations - they are essential ingredients of human life. Sikhism does no advocate renunciation or becoming an ascetic. Sikhs must study/work hard, earn an honest living, be successful, share our earnings with those in need and, at the same time, seek spiritual enlightenment. Sikhs contribute positively to society, and do not become a burden on it.

Happiness, on the other hand, is a very elusive pursuit. My life experience to date is that true happiness only comes if we develop a degree of contentment (santokh). Which comes with spiritual enrichment and the awareness that materialistic achievements are only illusory. We need to develop the ability to achieve worldly success, yet being able to detach ourselves from the end results - this is the key to 'santokh'. We have been given the gift of human form and we are advised by Guru Ji that this form has been granted to us so that we make an effort of meeting our 'Karta Purakh', the creator. (Bhayi prapat manukh dehoria, Gobind Milan ki eh tere beria.)

Therefore, though the basic necessities of living - health, wealth and success are very important, we must place meeting Waheguru as our prime motive in human life. Our efforts in getting closer to the ultimate aim of meeting Waheguru bring us

health, wealth, success and, most importantly, happiness. Happiness can only come with Naam Simran. I know a great number of successful people who are extremely unhappy because they lack spiritual nourishment, and suddenly find an emptiness which just cannot be filled. This emptiness is spiritual thirst. We must do something about this spiritual thirst from the earliest possible moment like right now, if we are already doing something about it.

I believe all Sikhs should be encouraged to do Simran in a systematic manner as a personal effort besides listening to tapes of mool mantar, and reciting it in Sangat.

The Sikh method of Meditation/Simran is called "Naam Japna" - recitation of the name of Waheguru. It is to remember at all times that he is everything to us. Therefore, regularly invoking his name and finally becoming one with him. That is ultimate peace. Doing our Nitnem (five daily banis); reading, singing, understanding and absorbing 'Gurbani'; attending and participating in Gurdwara activities as part of the Sadh Sangat and doing seva (community service) are all methods of nurturing love for Waheguru. Naam Simran is the activity to draw closer to Him and becoming one with Him. Make Naam Simran your prime activity in this lifetime.

Naam Japna is as simple as taking time our regularly to sit down and to recite: 'Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru...' or 'Stanaam, Satnaam, Satnaam...'. But as human beings we normally look for some sort of procedure, which is not clearly spelt out in Gurbani, but there are indications. I have followed the method prescribed to me, since the mid-seventies and have greatly benefited from it. I have attained what I desired in this lifetime and have had certain realizations and revelations because of Waheguru's grace through Naam Simran.

We should, initially, set aside one or two (say fifteen minutes to a half-hour) periods within a.twenty-four hour period strictly to do Naam Simran. Naam Simran, of course, can be combined with Nitnem. For example, Japuji Sahib followed by Naam Simran. Do Naam Simran regularly and give it prominence in your daily living. Throughout Sri Guru Granth Sahib we are urged again and again to do Naam Simran as an ongoing part of this lifetime. Get yourself into a routine. It will be difficult in the beginning, but once you establish a pattern you will find great joy in it. The period between midnight and 4 a.m. is called the 'ambrosial' period (amrit-vela) - the best period for Naam Simran. In a busy life in which time - management is very important, my personal recommendation is as follows: Retire for the day by 10 p.m., latest by 10:30 p.m. Set the alarm for either 2 a.m. or 3 a.m.. Go through the Naam Simran routine set down below within one hour at that time and go back to sleep, to get up at the usual time that you wake up to face the

world for the day! The sleep that one has after doing Naam Simran is the most blissful and restful. If you suffer from insomnia, I guarantee that this procedure will cure you of it.

If the above recommendation is not practical due to your circumstances (other than the fact that good t.v. programs only come at 10 p.m.!) then be practical - as long as you do develop a daily routine. Some precautions: Many 'Sants' and 'Sant Deras' advocate various methods of Naam Simran. All of them expect you to become their disciples, contribute towards their well being or become subservient to them in return for being 'given' Naam. Some will prescribe special postures, penances, dressing, clothing, colours, etc. Generally, all will tell you how hard Naam Simran is and that theirs is the only true method.

Some will whisper special 'mantra' into your ears all being very secretive, as being your special Naam'. There is nothing secretive about Naam Simran. It is the birthright of everyone of us subject ONLY to the Grace of Waheguru. Unfortunately, our "Rehat Maryada" does not spell out the methodology for Naam Simran, giving these purveyors of supposedly Sikh spirituality a free for all in advocating whatever they please. There are, of course, genuine spiritually-elevated souls whose company is imperative to following the true path. Such genuine mahatmas do not normally advertise themselves or come in elaborate clothing/dress. They are normally very

simple, humble, pleasant, unassuming and undemanding. 'Frauds' will also quote passages from Gurbani and translations to suggest that we need the service of an elevated human being (Sant or Guru) to put us on the right path or grant us Naam Simran. Our only Guru is Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Firstly, remember that our 'ultimate guide' is Waheguru. Take one step towards Him and He will take a thousand steps towards you! (Charan Sharan guru ek painda jai chal, Satgur kot painda agey hoe lait hai.) Adopt this method as the starting point - your introduction, to Naam Simran - Waheguru will guide you, or send the right person, or even direct you to the right book to answer any question or doubt you might have, or develop as you start doing Naam Simran regularly.

Remember that He gave you human form for you to get closer to Him, so it is logical to assume that He will guide us and protect us - and, believe me, He does. All we have to do is to make a sincere effort to get closer to him as a regular daily routine. Though Naam Simran is serious business, remember it is fun. It is a very joyful experience - give yourself a chance to experience this joy! Secondly, remember that we have to still (or focus) our mind on the attribute/virtues/greatness of Waheguru when we do Naam Simran. The purpose of Naam Simran is lost if our mouth recites Naam but our mind is involved in our mundane, daily problems.

Thirdly - learn the first paudi, second stanza and the 'ending' of our Ardas is the best prayer for us as Sikhs to, firstly, invoke the names of all our Gurus, and then to request Waheguru to shower His Grace upon us. The first paudi of our Ardas is the first paudi of a 'bani' of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji called 'Chandi ki var' which, as a whole as yet has not gained much prominence within Sikhism though research is ongoing on as to its attributes.

Nevertheless, in so far as it invokes the names of all our Gur us, we should accept it in great reverence in our daily life. If you do not know.the mini - Ardas by heart initially, replace it by your own prayer asking Waheguru to bless you, His humble servant, with His gift of Naam Simran, and ask for the well-being of all mankind. This does not detract from the fact that, as Sikhs, all of us should know the full Ardas as prescribed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) by heart.

Basic Preparations:

It is preferable that you take a bath/shower before doing Naam Simran. One should at least do a 'Panj Ishnana' i.e. washing your face, your arms and your feet. Use cold water because that wakes you up. Massaging your scalp with your fingers perhaps using a little hair oil helps you to relax and it is

good for your hair and scalp! For health purposes, a glass of warm water, with either lemon or lime juice, preferably freshly squeezed, with a spoonful of honey is recommended. While you are doing your basic preparation, it is a good idea to recite Japuji Sahib, or at least as much of it as you know. Start learning it by heart, it is very easy! This puts you in the right frame of mind to do Naam Simran.

Environment

Use a secluded spot and do Naam Simran alone. It is also a good idea to get together some like-minded friends and do a sadh - sangat Naam Simran once in a while (say, weekly) and also talk about it and encourage each other. A good environment is one with very dim light. Preferable atmosphere is a quiet one. If environment is noisy, by all means put on a tape of Naam Simran, Kirtan or sounds of nature, like waves on a seashore; birds chirping softly; sound of the wild - but very softly. There is no harm in using a mild incense, as fragrance is conducive to helping you to focus.

In short, create an atmosphere which is conductive to meditating. Sit cross-legged with your back straight. Place a cushion/folded blanket or pillow under your bottom - this helps one to sit up straight. If you have difficulty, then sit in any form

or on a straight-backed chair, as long as your back is straight. Sit against a wall or chair if that makes you comfortable. Do not lie down because that will only put you to sleep again. So, no cheating!

Focus:

Note that for your basic Naam Simran you can use either 'Satnam', 'Waheguru' or the full Gurumanter 'Satnam Sri Waheguru'. You decide on your variation. Personally, I find that when I want to say 'Naam' inwardly (without being hearted) I have a tendency of using 'Satnam' (breath in 'Sat', and breath out 'Naam'). And when I want to say it aloud I tend to say either 'Satnam Sri Waheguru', or just 'Waheguru'. Initially, when you close your eyes you will be starting into the back of your eyelids. When you are focused try to centre your mind between your eyes drawing yourself backwards just behind your forehead. This region is referred to as the 'Dasam Dwar' (the Tenth Door), by Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It is called the Tenth Door simply because it is the tenth aperture (opening) in your body - the spiritual opening. The other nine being two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, one urinary/reproductory passage and the anus. The Dasam Dwar is also referred to, on other Eastern religions, as the 'Third Eye' – the spiritual eye between the other two eyes. Initially when you try to centre your focus to this spot, it is an overwhelming sensation, you get a headache for trying

too hard, it will be scary and upsetting but, with practice, there is a great sense of joy and exhilaration when you reach his important region which is the 'Simran Doorway'

Sit down as prescribed. Start breathing slowly taking deep breaths. Breathe in deeply and as you breath out say aloud 'SATNAM SRI WAHEGURU'. Keep repeating until you are settled down and find your whole body relaxing and your voice becoming quieter.

(b) Slowly, keeping your focus on your breathing, replace saying 'Satnam Sri Waheguru' with an inner 'SATNAM' 'Sat' as you breath in and 'Naam' as you breath out. Say this inside your mind, not out loud. (This is often referred to as 'saas-giras' which means that even while breathing and eating, to invoke His name.) And the ideal state is, of course, when we are able to recite. Waheguru Satnam with every breath that we take. This stage you should already be in a state of.'Samadhi' - with your mind focused on the attributes of Waheguru. Remember your mind at this stage should be fully focused on the virtues of our Creator, Waheguru who is our father, our mother, our kinsman, our brother. He is our protector everywhere: Tu mera pita, tu hai mera mata, tu mera bandhap, tu mera bhrata. Tu mera rakha sabhni Thhayin, ta bhau keha kada jio.

The Joyous Journey of Naam Simran:

In this stage, remember: Your breathing may have slowed down, and as you breath you are saying either Satnaam or Waheguru internally, with each breath. Keep yourself RELAXED and upright. If you concentrate too hard you will develop a headache in the early stages. You have surrendered your mind to Waheguru Permatma to do as He pleases. ENJOY THIS STAGE IN BLISS. Various experiences will manifest. A sense of warmth and well-being; exhilaration, a sense of liberation, freedom and joy. Some will experience 'going in a spin'. You will feel as if the whole room you are sitting in has gone into a wild spin. Hang on and enjoy the rollercoaster experience! From that point on, with time, other various experiences will occur. Once again, if at any point you experience anything frightening - remember that Waheguru is your Protector, ask for His protection. (Tati vao na laagayi, Parbrahm Sharanayi...). There are adverse forces which will try everything negative to stop you from Naam Simran - that is their job in the "Order of Things". Do not allow these dark forces to stop you from your 'purpose of this human life' which is ultimately to meet your Creator, 'Waheguru'. I sometimes find my mind wandering off on a pilgrimage/yatra of some of our Sikh shrines in Pakistan/India some of which I have not yet physically visited! I find this most enjoyable and refreshing. When you feel that you have had enough, or as stipulated by your circumstances, and you want to end your Naam Simran,

you must come out of it slowly. DO NOT END IT ABRUPTLY. Let the joy and ecstasy linger on for the rest of the day.

CAUTION: If you experience a headache initially, all that is happening is that you are trying too hard, RELAX! Remember, Naam Simran is JOY, not a job, and definitely not hard work. You are concentrating too hard. This is natural. Just like learning how to ride a bicycle. Because you are tensed and trying too hard, you keep falling off the bike but, with time, as you relax and become flexible, you will ride the bicycle with ease. Similarly, relax and the headache will be gone.

CONCLUSION:

Each of us is a special being. We are spiritual beings on a human journey. Our earthly father is Sri Guru Gobind Singh in whose image and example we should live this human life. The method given above is a starting point of 'Naam Simran'. It is the start of your journey. As time goes on, through the grace of Waheguru, you will modify the method of Naam Simran as suits you best. MAKE THE START TODAY and enjoy the gift Naam Simran for the rest of your life. The benefits of Naam Simran are:

1. You are fulfilling the true purpose of this life in human form.

2. It helps remove all physical ailments, sicknesses and tensions. it is therapy, and Waheguru's our doctor.

3. It makes you sharper and more focused. It strengthens your mind.

4. In today's fast crazy world it relieves stress.

5. It enhances your life generally and it is the key to our salvation.

6. It draws 'good elements' towards you and wards off the evil.

7. It raises your self-esteem, puts you in a state of 'Chardi Kala' which brings you success in life.

We, as Sikhs, do not subscribe to idol worship. Though some Naam Simran sevaks might recommend that, in the initial stage, one can perhaps put a picture/painting of one of our Gurus, or a candle, as a focus point. I believe that we should not subscribe to this method. These are not Sikh methods. Focusing on a 'picture' of one of our Gurus or staring at a lighted candle

can become a serious limiting factor towards ultimate realization of Waheguru. Why not start off on the right foot from the very beginning? Focusing on our breathing is just as easy and once we can extend the limitations of our mind to grapple with the infinite virtues of Waheguru, focusing is no longer a problem! Naam Simran acts as a 'protective clock' against adverse elements, negative vibes, depression, lack of confidence, other physical and mental ailments - a protection against evil. It nurtures 'Chardi Kala', confidence, self-esteem and everything positive and good. One feels fully protected when one does Naam Simran regularly. Naam Simran helps you to realize your full potential and helps you reach your aspirations in this life.